

WHAT'S UP?

This fall the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be placing buoys on Lake Onalaska to help lake users recognize an area which is important to migratory waterfowl.

The La Crosse County Conservation Alliance is working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to encourage hunters, anglers, sailors, and other boaters to avoid disturbing waterfowl in the portion of Lake Onalaska marked by buoys as a Voluntary Waterfowl Avoidance Area (VWAA).



WHY IS THE AREA IMPORTANT?

Four decades ago, many lakes in Minnesota and Wisconsin that were traditional stopping points for migrating ducks began deteriorating.

Critical food plants were lost due to rough fish, contaminants, water level changes, or the invasion of exotic plant species.

The ducks responded by shifting their migratory routes to the La Crosse area of the Mississippi River where habitat conditions were still favorable. The attraction to this area was the presence of wildcelery, an aquatic plant. The amount of wildcelery growing within the boundaries of the VWAA, combined with other features, make this particular site attractive as both a feeding and resting area to large numbers of migrating waterfowl.



Of the waterfowl species that use Lake Onalaska during fall migration, canvasbacks benefit the most from management efforts such as the VWAA.

IS DISTURBANCE A PROBLEM?

Canvasbacks only spend a few days or weeks on the Upper Mississippi Refuge during migration, but may feed up to seven hours each day on wildcelery tubers and other plant and animal foods. These foods have high energy which is easily converted to fat. This fat, or stored energy, improves the odds for the birds to survive the rigors of migration and winter.

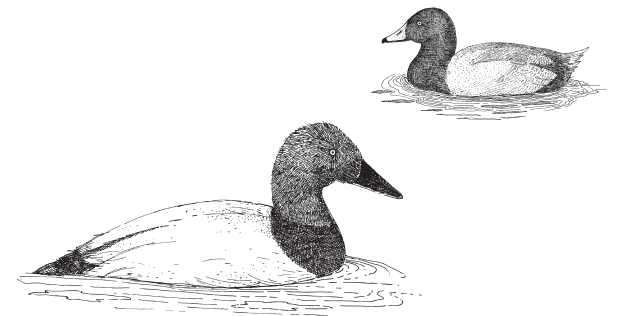
Unfortunately, canvasbacks are particularly wary of activities near their feeding and resting areas. Relatively distant motorboats can flush these ducks from the lake. Flight is exhausting work for the birds and can burn up valuable fat reserves. Excessive disturbances could not only cost the birds energy but also deny their access to feeding areas.

HOW YOU CAN HELP?

Boaters who detour around the buoys marking the VWAA will help the birds to feed and rest undisturbed. The VWAA will be in effect from October 15 to mid-November on Lake Onalaska.

You can help by voluntarily throttling down and avoiding concentrations of waterfowl, wherever they occur, helping these birds gather energy for their long migration flight.

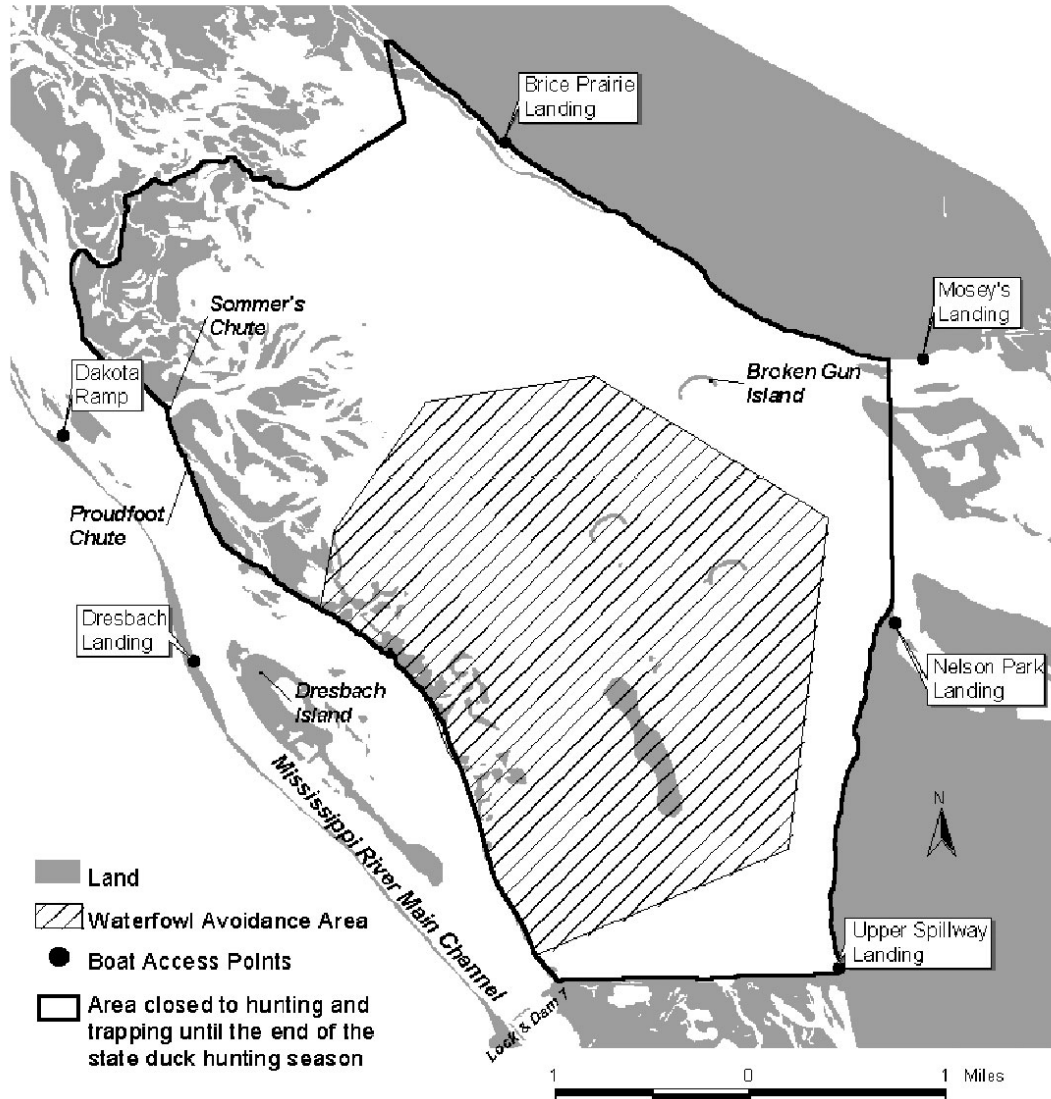
The VWAA was most recently monitored in 1997. Trained observers reported that over 90% of the boaters on Lake Onalaska complied with the VWAA.



THANKS FOR YOUR HELP!

WATERFOWL AVOIDANCE AREA

Please detour around the area in Lake Onalaska marked with buoys from October 15 through mid-November to help waterfowl feed and rest undisturbed.

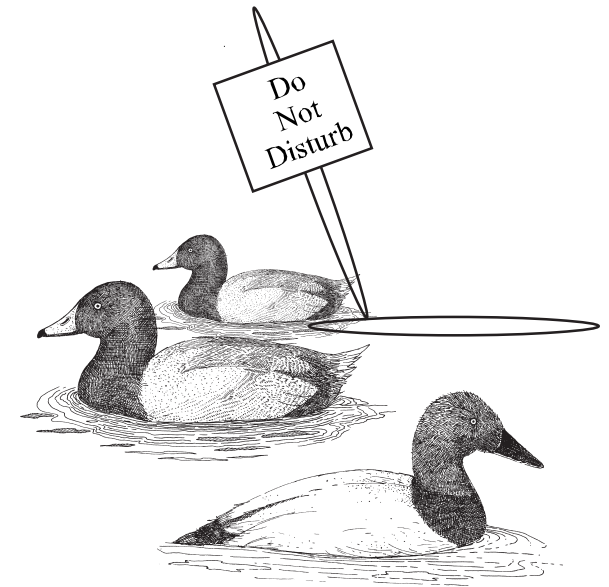


Printed by the Lake Onalaska Rehabilitation and Protection District in cooperation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, UW-Extension La Crosse County, and La Crosse County Conservation Alliance.

September 2002

Lake Onalaska

Waterfowl Avoidance Area



**A Voluntary Conservation Program In Effect From
October 15
Through
Mid-November**